

Always Been Yours Chapter 411

Chapter 411 Remus Comes to Vienna

Nicholas handed his phone to Gregory with a faint smile.

Seeing the photo, Gregory shouted excitedly, “That’s a wonderful picture you took of us, Daddy!”

Upon hearing his words, Tessa glanced down at the photo as well. In the photo, she was holding Gregory in her arms, and they were both smiling happily. Behind them were the diffused lights of the city, which made the photo look as beautiful as a fairy-tale world.

Gregory’s childish voice rang beside her again. “Too bad that Daddy isn’t in the photo.”

Upon hearing his words, Tessa also found it quite regrettable. However, she soon came up with a solution. She spoke fluently to a tourist from another boat in a foreign language, asking, “Can you help us take a picture?”

“Yes, of course,” the tourist agreed without hesitation. He didn’t forget to praise Gregory, saying, “Your kid looks as adorable as an angel.”

“Thank you,” Tessa thanked him with a bright smile. She had heard a lot of such compliments today. She had felt embarrassed at first, but now she was able to accept them.

After they exchanged a few words, the tourist got ready to take a picture of the three of them. Nicholas stepped forward to hold Tessa in his arms, whereas Gregory was still in Tessa’s arms.

A few seconds later, the photo was taken. Tessa took back her cell phone and thanked the tourist once again.

The tourist then waved them goodbye.

Wrapping his arms around Tessa's neck, Gregory urged happily, "Quick, Miss Tessa. Let's take a look at the photo!"

Tessa nodded. The instant she opened the photo that had been taken just now, she was totally stunned.

In the photo, the three of them were smiling happily like a family, especially Nicholas. He rarely revealed his emotions, but in the photo, he exuded tenderness through every pore as a faint smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

Having gotten tired from the boat ride afterward, the three of them returned to the hotel's presidential suite. Tessa helped Gregory wash up and lulled him to sleep before turning around and going to the room next door.

Nicholas had finished washing up and was sitting with his back leaning against the head of the bed in the room. When he saw Tessa come in, he said tenderly, "I've run the bath for you."

"Okay." Tessa smiled sweetly. Then, she picked up a change of clothes, turned around, and entered the bathroom.

They spent the night making out again. At the end of their lovemaking, Tessa lay in Nicholas' arms, feeling tired and weak all over. Upon recalling how she had spent the last few days, she only felt happy and content.

The two-day weekend passed in the blink of an eye, during which time Tessa and Gregory had a lot of fun. On Monday morning, the three of them flew back to Vienna on the earliest flight.

As soon as they arrived home, Nicholas got a phone call from Kieran. “What’s the matter?”

Kieran’s anxious voice sounded through the phone. “Bad news, Nicholas! Grandpa has gone to Vienna; he’s probably gotten off the plane by now.”

Nicholas asked with a frown, “What happened?”

“Grandpa found out where you’re staying, as well as the matter between you and my future sister-in-law.” Kieran told Nicholas what he knew. Then, he urged, “Nicholas, hurry up and get her to leave. Otherwise, if Grandpa arrives at your place, he might say something offensive to her.”

“Got it.” Nicholas hung up with a clouded expression.

Seeing his expression, Tessa walked over to him and asked worriedly, “Did something happen?”

“It’s about the company, so you don’t have to worry about it.” Nicholas hid the truth from her. Then, he changed the subject, saying, “Don’t you have to go to the orchestra today? It’s getting late now. Hurry up and go.”

Tessa didn’t think much about it either. She nodded, then said goodbye to Gregory and left with her violin.

An hour later, Remus arrived at the villa with Andrew.

Upon seeing Remus, Gregory jumped off the sofa in surprise and trotted over to him. “Great-Grandpa, why are you here?” he said while carefully holding Remus by the arm. Then, he asked concernedly with a respectful expression, “Great-Grandpa, are you well now?”

When Remus saw how obedient Gregory was, his chilly expression finally broke into a faint smile. “I’m well now,” he said while looking around. Finally, his gaze

fell upon Nicholas, who was standing nearby, and his eyes darkened. “Andrew, take Greg to the garden to play for a while.”

Always Been Yours Chapter 412

Chapter 412 You'll Regret It

Andrew nodded before walking toward Gregory. "Young Master Gregory, would you like to go to the garden with me?"

Gregory blinked his eyes. As he was clever enough to know that Remus wanted to discuss something with his father, he subconsciously turned to look at Nicholas.

Seeing the questioning look in Gregory's eyes, Nicholas gave him a slight nod.

Soon, Gregory was led out of the living room by Andrew. As Remus watched the two walk into the distance, his initially gentle expression darkened at once, and he projected a commanding aura through every pore. Glaring at Nicholas sternly, he said in a commanding voice, "Where is that Reinhart woman? Get her here."

Nicholas' face darkened slightly. "She isn't here. Also, she's got a name."

However, Remus didn't believe Nicholas' words at all. "She's not here? Do you think that I don't know anything?" He let out a snort. Then, he continued in a hostile tone, "Don't think that I don't know why you're staying here. Aren't you doing all this for the sake of that Reinhart woman?"

Upon hearing Remus' words, Nicholas decided to stop hiding the truth from him. "So what if I'm staying here for her sake? Greg likes her, and I don't want to leave her either."

Anger surged up within Remus when he heard this. He chided, "Like I said, that woman isn't good enough for you at all."

"Whether she's good enough for me isn't up to you. She's good enough for me as long as I think she is."

The atmosphere became tense all at once as Nicholas confronted Remus, refusing to budge.

Seeing how determined Nicholas was, Remus boiled with rage. “Do you not believe that I’ll drive her into a corner?!”

Unsurprisingly, Nicholas’ face was as black as thunder the instant Remus said that. “If you insist on doing so, all I can say is that you’ll regret it.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“It’s you who threatened me first!” Nicholas met Remus’ gaze with his dark eyes.

The two were at each other’s throats.

Just as the atmosphere in the living room was horrifyingly tense, Edward came in from the outside. As soon as he came in, he saw the two men confronting each other, and he immediately put on a solemn expression. “President, I’ve done what you asked me to,” he said. With that, he handed the envelope in his hand to Nicholas and nodded respectfully to Remus in greeting.

Nicholas took the envelope, but he didn’t look at it. Instead, he handed it to Remus right away, saying, “Just take a look.”

Remus frowned. Still, he took the envelope and poured out its contents, only to realize that these were some documents and testimonials for Nicholas’ application to rejoin the army. “Nicholas Sawyer, how dare you really do this?!” He glowered furiously at Nicholas in disbelief.

Nicholas remained unmoved, though.

Upon seeing his response, Remus nearly exploded with rage. He rebuked bitterly in a loud voice, “Are you gonna drive me to my death in order to avoid the engagement?!”

“You should know who is forcing whom here, Grandpa.” Nicholas looked at Remus frostily. “If you don’t want me to rejoin the army, my request is simple. Stop forcing me into marrying the woman I don’t want to marry.”

Unwilling to resign himself to this, Remus clenched his teeth and questioned, “Are you really unable to live without that Reinhart woman?”

Nicholas fell silent for a moment. Then, he replied in a cold voice, “I’ve told you my request just now. It’s simple, but it’s okay if you don’t agree to it. Kieran can take care of the company, anyway, so whether I’m there or not doesn’t make any difference.” He didn’t give Remus a definite answer because he feared that Remus would target Tessa in secret. After all, it was hard for him to guard against Remus’ resourcefulness and endless means. Furthermore, he couldn’t bear to let Tessa suffer any grievances, nor could he bear the consequences of losing her.

Obviously, Remus was infuriated by Nicholas’ irresponsible reply. He reproached in a stern voice, “How impudent! Is that what you’re supposed to say?”

Nicholas’ expression remained unchanged. He replied coldly, “I’ve made my position clear. If you insist on going ahead with the engagement, I’ll also adhere to my choice.” Then, not wanting to continue the subject, he changed the topic, saying, “Since you’ve come all the way here, you must’ve been tired. I’ve had a room cleaned up for you. Just have a good rest; I’ll have someone send you back later on.”

Always Been Yours Chapter 413

Chapter 413 His Position on His Marriage

Remus was in no mood for rest, of course. However, Nicholas ignored him altogether and went to the garden to pick Gregory up before leaving the villa right away.

Remus looked furious as he sat in the living room with his chest heaving up and down. “How outrageous! This is simply unacceptable! He’s grown up indeed. How dare he defy me like this!”

Seeing how angry he was, Andrew, standing beside him, persuaded, “Old Master Sawyer, I think Master Nicholas is determined this time. Why don’t you comply with his wishes instead? Didn’t you decide not to care about the matter anymore early on?”

Remus replied, “I did decide not to care about the matter anymore, but I think it’ll be a great pity for Nicholas to really miss a good girl like Hayley. How could that Reinhart woman compare to her? You know what happened back then. That Reinhart woman is totally after our family’s fortune.”

Andrew hesitated for a moment. Still, he chose to speak for Nicholas, saying, “Indeed, Miss Stone is a fine lady, but Master Nicholas doesn’t like her. Nothing good will come out of an arranged marriage. If Master Nicholas and Miss Stone become an unhappy couple in the future, and he blames you for that, won’t you beat yourself up over it?”

Remus remained silent as his face took on an inscrutable expression.

Meanwhile, only after she arrived at the orchestra did Tessa realize with the benefit of hindsight that something was wrong. Nicholas had let her leave in too much of a hurry. Obviously, he was trying to send her away. In an instant, she got worried

about the situation at home, having no clue what the matter that made Nicholas so anxious for her to leave was.

As the situation at home was weighing on her mind, she was in no mood for practice at all, so she put down her violin and decided to rest for a while. Just when she was holding her cell phone and hesitating whether to call Nicholas to ask him what had happened, he called her. She answered the phone, saying, “Nicholas.”

“When will you finish your practice? I’m now outside the entrance of the orchestra building.”

“Just give me a minute. I’ll come out after asking my teacher for leave,” Tessa replied. With that, she hung up and went to her teacher.

A while later, Tessa walked out of the orchestra building to see Nicholas standing nearby in a black suit with Gregory in his arms. She quickly stepped toward them, only to realize that Gregory had fallen asleep on the man’s shoulder, which made her bite back her questions.

Nicholas noticed Tessa’s hesitant expression, of course. Taking her hand in an unaffected manner, he said in a gentle voice, “Let’s go somewhere before I tell you about it.”

Tessa nodded before leaving with Nicholas.

To Tessa’s surprise, Nicholas took her to a hotel. After they entered the hotel room, Nicholas had Tessa wait for him in the living room while he carried Gregory into the bedroom to lay the boy down in bed.

When Nicholas came out, he saw Tessa sitting on the sofa with a frown. Knowing that she had sensed something was wrong, he went over to her right away and held her in his arms, confessing, “I had you leave this morning because my grandpa came. I don’t want you to be upset by some unkindness in front of him, so I had you leave.”

Tessa looked up at him in surprise. “Your grandpa came?”

Nicholas nodded. “He arrived in Vienna shortly after we got off our flight.”

Tessa pressed her lips together. Then, she asked somewhat uneasily, “Is your grandpa here because of your engagement?”

Nicholas didn’t deny it. “I’ve turned him down, so you don’t have to be worried.”

Still, when Tessa heard this, a feeling of self-reproach surged inside her. She was happy while she was with Nicholas, but she had never thought about the situation he was in. She had only met Remus twice, but she knew that he was a very domineering old man with a strong desire for control. Nicholas must’ve been put under tremendous stress by rebelling against that old man. Who knows what he’ll do to force us to break up?

Seeing the look of anxiety and self-reproach on Tessa’s face, Nicholas saw through what she was thinking at a glance. Tightening his arms around her waist, he advised her in a gentle voice, saying, “Don’t think too much about it. In fact, this matter has nothing to do with you.”

“How could it have nothing to do with me?” Tessa bit her lower lip; the self-reproach on her face was obvious at a glance.

Nicholas raised his hand to save Tessa’s lower lip from her teeth. Caressing it gently, he replied, “Even if I’m not with you, I have to tell him my position on my own marriage.”

Always Been Yours Chapter 414

Chapter 414 I Want You to Leave Nicholas

Nicholas then continued, “Grandpa has been throwing his weight around all these years, so he’s used to having others obey him in everything. This matter is the perfect opportunity to let him understand that he can’t accomplish everything by imposing his will on other people.”

Upon hearing this, Tessa felt somewhat better deep down. However, she still felt a little uneasy. Leaning against Nicholas’ chest, she asked softly, “Will your grandpa give in?”

“Don’t worry, I have a way to make him not stop us,” Nicholas said while lowering his head to kiss Tessa on the forehead.

Unable to restrain her curiosity, Tessa asked, “What way?”

“I had Edward go through the procedures for me to rejoin the army.” Nicholas didn’t hide his plans from her. “I quit the army back then partly because of his wishes. In order for me not to rejoin the army, he’ll definitely relent.”

Upon hearing this, Tessa finally put her mind to rest. At the same time, she thought Nicholas was very cunning, though she didn’t say it out loud. After all, Nicholas was working hard for their future together.

The three of them stayed in the hotel that night.

Meanwhile, Hayley was meeting her assistant in another hotel. As it turned out, she had learned about Remus’ trip to Vienna, so she came to Vienna after him. Knowing that Remus must have come here to look for Nicholas, she had her men keep an eye on his whereabouts early on.

In the brightly lit living room, Hayley's assistant told her all the information she had gathered today. "Miss Hayley, Old Master Sawyer is indeed here to meet President Sawyer. Also, we found out that President Sawyer has been here for a long time; he's been living with a woman named Tessa Reinhart all this while."

Hayley's exquisitely made-up face was horrifyingly sullen when she finished listening to her assistant's words. Damn it! To think that Nicholas and Tessa are together without everyone's knowledge! At the thought of this, Hayley ground her teeth in anger. She was unwilling to accept that she had lost to Tessa—that b*tch!—like this. That b*tch has been driven out of the country, yet she stubbornly stays with Nicholas. What gave her the cheek to do that?

The more Hayley thought about it, the more she felt she had to do something. In what way am I inferior to Tessa, that b*tch?!

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Tessa didn't know that someone was harboring malicious thoughts toward her. The next day, she had a warm and cozy breakfast with Nicholas and Gregory before going to the orchestra with her violin on her back.

When it was almost noon, a staff member suddenly came to her, saying, "Tessa, the front desk says that somebody's asking for you. You'd better go and take a look."

At first, Hayley thought it was Remus who had come to see her, and she walked out uneasily. After all, Nicholas or her friends would've called her directly instead of coming to the orchestra to see her. However, as soon as she reached the front desk, she found that the one coming to ask for her wasn't Remus, but someone she didn't expect. "Miss Stone?" She looked in surprise at Hayley, who was decked out in designer clothes.

Hayley shot a glance at Tessa with an arrogant expression. Then, with a slight curl of her red lips, she mocked, "Seems that you still remember me, Miss Reinhart. That's great. Let's talk."

Tessa frowned slightly, knowing deep down that Hayley was up to no good. Still, she agreed to Hayley's suggestion.

The two women went to the cafe on the other side of the street. After the waiter served them coffee and left, Hayley stirred her coffee with a sneer, mocking, "Miss Reinhart, you're quite capable, huh? To think that you're able to bewitch him to the point of rebelling against Old Master Sawyer to be with you even after you've been driven out of the country!"

The furrows in Tessa's brow deepened further at Hayley's sarcastic words. She shot back curtly, "Miss Stone, if you've got something to say, just shoot. Don't you think it's unbecoming for you to speak so sarcastically?"

Infuriated, Hayley glared at her while seething with rage.

Tessa didn't mind it, though. She picked up her cup of coffee and took a small sip while letting Hayley glare at her.

Seeing how unperturbed Tessa was, Hayley felt irritatingly depressed. Taking a deep breath, she suppressed the anger inside her, saying, "I want you to leave Nicholas. You're not the right person for him at all."

"Whether I'm the right person to be with Nicholas or not, I don't think it's up to you, Miss Stone."

Always Been Yours Chapter 415

Chapter 415 The Consequences of Provoking Her

Tessa was only telling the truth in a calm manner, but Hayley felt that she was showing off in front of her. Gnashing her teeth in anger, she added resentfully, “You probably don’t know this yet, but Nicholas has fallen out with Old Master Sawyer. Old Master Sawyer got so angry because of this that he was hospitalized several times.”

Tessa pursed her lips in silence. Indeed, she didn’t know these things since Nicholas had never told her about them.

Hayley’s eyes flickered briefly when she saw that Tessa was silent. She continued, “You should’ve known that with Nicholas’ social status, his future wife has to be someone extraordinary. You’re not good enough for him at all in terms of social status and family background. If you insist on being with him, you’ll only be a drag and an obstacle to him in the future!”

Tessa’s face fell little by little as she listened to Hayley’s words.

Seeing Tessa’s expression, Hayley was inwardly delighted. She continued with a sneer, “If you don’t agree with what I said just now, let me put it in another way. If the Sawyer Group runs into a crisis, what can you do for Nicholas? I’m telling you, you can do nothing other than watch helplessly.”

Tessa fell silent with a look of embarrassment, for she knew that what Hayley said was true. Indeed, she couldn’t be of help to Nicholas at the moment, but inwardly, she didn’t want to be deflated by Hayley. Taking a deep breath, she straightened her back, met Hayley’s gaze, and replied in an indescribably uncompromising tone, “It’s undeniable that the current me is of no help to Nicholas, but I believe in his capabilities. He’ll never let the Sawyer Group fall into crisis, so your hypothesis doesn’t stand up at all.”

Hayley was rendered speechless; she never thought Tessa would refute her in such a firm attitude. She retorted defiantly, “Everything in the world is unpredictable. And besides, the business world is like the battlefield, where everything is subject to change. Can you guarantee that Nicholas will always make the best decisions?”

“I just told you the answer. I believe in Nicholas, so you’d better stop talking about such a meaningless topic,” Tessa said, rendering Hayley speechless once again. Seeing how Hayley almost exploded with rage, she lowered her eyes and added impassively, “As for your accusation that I’m an obstacle to Nicholas, I don’t agree with that, Miss Stone. I’ll never be a drag on him by being with him. On the contrary, I’ll be the motivation for him to keep moving forward.”

Hayley was pissed off by Tessa’s words. Is this b*tch showing off in front of me?

Just then, Tessa’s voice rang in her ear again. “Miss Stone, I know you can’t resign yourself to the fact that Nicholas is in love with me, but if you really had the ability to make him stay with you, you wouldn’t have gone out of your way here to say these things in front of me. So, by coming to me, you’ve lost to me completely.”

“Shut up!” Hayley barked in a harsh voice. Exasperated, she picked up the cup of coffee on the table and splashed it onto Tessa right away. I’m Stone Enterprise’s heiress! How can I possibly lose to Tessa, who is inferior to me in every regard?!

All of this happened so quickly that Tessa had coffee splashed all over her before she could respond. As she looked at the stains on her clothes, her face darkened all at once. She warned angrily, “Don’t go too far, Miss Stone.”

“I’m going too far? I’m telling you, if you don’t leave Nicholas, I can go even further than this!” Seeing that Tessa had stubbornly refused to leave Nicholas, Hayley revealed her true colors. With a sinister look in her eyes, she said, “Nicholas Sawyer is the man I fancy, and I’ll never allow him to marry any woman other than me. Here’s my advice: leave Nicholas and disappear from our sights, or you’ll bear the consequences of provoking me.”

Unsurprisingly, Tessa's face became as black as thunder when she heard this. At this moment, she suddenly recalled how Remus had previously intimidated her into going abroad in the same way. As a feeling of humiliation spread through her, she gritted her teeth and answered back, "Miss Stone, I admit that you do have a prominent family background, or I wouldn't have been targeted by you guys and forced into going abroad back then. But wouldn't it be too naive of you to think of resorting to old tactics now? This is a foreign country. Can you do whatever you want here?"

Always Been Yours Chapter 416

Chapter 416 You'll See

“You’ll see whether I can do it or not.” Hayley stared at Tessa sullenly with venomous eyes.

Tessa shuddered involuntarily. Inwardly, she was somewhat scared, but she put on a brave front by standing up and looking down at Hayley. She replied with a sneer, “Miss Stone, it seems that you’re mistaken about one thing. You’re neither Nicholas’ elder nor a person of consequence to him. The matter between Nicholas and me is none of your business. Do you think you can get Nicholas to be with you by threatening me? On the contrary, you’ve only made me feel that you’re a bad loser. So much for the upbringing of a socialite from a respectable family, huh?” With that, she turned around and left right away.

Watching Tessa’s figure disappear from the private room, Hayley got so furious that she overturned the table right away. “I’ll never let you off, you b*tch!” Her angry voice sounded from inside the private room, accompanied by the sound of glass shattering.

Tessa paused in her tracks for a moment before continuing to leave without looking back. After returning to the orchestra, she changed into the spare clothes she had kept there and went back to the practice room. However, it was obvious that she wasn’t in a good mood, so much so that she kept making mistakes while playing the violin during the afternoon training session.

Hathaway stopped Tessa’s performance with a frown. “What’s wrong with you, Tessa? You’re so not yourself today. Are you feeling unwell?”

Since it was something personal, Tessa didn’t want to talk about it. Therefore, she nodded and admitted, “Yeah, I’m feeling a little out of sorts.”

“In that case, I’ll give you half a day off. Go home and rest.” Hathaway didn’t think much about it. Instead, she asked with concern, “Do you need me to send you to the hospital?”

“No, I don’t have to take a day off. I’m not feeling that unwell.” Tessa didn’t want to go back right now. She knew very well that if she were to go home in her present mood, Nicholas would easily notice that something was wrong. “I’m fine, Miss Hathaway. Let’s continue.” With that, she took a deep breath, pulled herself together, and continued her practice.

Unable to dissuade her, Hathaway had no choice but to agree to it.

Meanwhile, Nicholas took Gregory back to the villa; he had made preparations for Remus to be sent back to the country.

Upon seeing Nicholas, Remus let out a snort and pretended not to see him. It could be said that his trip to Vienna was in vain, but he could do nothing about it. Not only was Nicholas determined not to marry Hayley, but he even threatened to rejoin the army.

Noticing that Remus seemed to be angry with Nicholas, Gregory got close to him and acted cute like a spoiled child in every way possible. “Don’t be angry, Great-Grandpa. Uncle Kieran said that being angry will cause wrinkles to form on your face. You have enough wrinkles already, Great-Grandpa. If you get even more wrinkles, you’ll look even less handsome.”

Seeing how the little boy appeased him with a straight face, Remus didn’t know whether to laugh or to frown. Nevertheless, a smile appeared on his face.

Nicholas threw his son a commending look.

A while later, Nicholas sent Remus to the airport.

Before boarding the plane, Remus looked at his most outstanding grandson beside him. He said gloomily, “The Stones have proposed that your engagement to their

daughter be called off. Since you're determined not to marry her, let's forget about it. I don't want to force you into it."

Upon hearing his words, Nicholas replied icily, "Even if you force me into marrying her, I'm not gonna be willing to do so."

Speechless, Remus shot Nicholas an angry glare, but he said nothing in the end. He asked with a soft snort, "Now that I'm not forcing you anymore, when are you gonna go back?"

Nicholas didn't give him a specific time, though. "We'll see."

Remus was vexed at his response. Looking daggers at him, he warned, "If you don't want to come back, I'm not gonna force you to do so. But don't you dare rejoin the army!"

Nicholas didn't really take Remus' words to heart. "I got it. It's almost time for the flight to take off. Andrew, please take good care of Grandpa along the way," he said to Andrew. "Remember to give me a call after the flight touches down."

"Please rest assured, Master Nicholas," Andrew replied with a nod.

Nicholas watched Remus disappear into the crowd before turning around to leave the airport. After getting into the car, he massaged the space between his eyebrows wearily. Remus seemed to have given in at the moment, but he had predicted this long ago.

Always Been Yours Chapter 417

Chapter 417 Nicholas' Tenderness

Nicholas knew very well that with Remus' personality, his giving in was just a tactic to deceive him for the time being. This was also why he didn't agree to return to the country just now.

In the evening, Nicholas went to pick Tessa up with Gregory.

"Miss Tessa!" Gregory said in an animated voice as he flung himself into Tessa's arms.

Upon seeing the little boy, Tessa managed a smile and picked him up.

Gregory didn't notice how forced Tessa's smile was, though. He asked in a childlike voice, "Miss Tessa, did you miss me today?"

"Yeah, I did," Tessa said while planting a kiss on Gregory's fleshy cheek.

Gregory laughed happily in response. When Tessa saw how happy he was, the gloom in her eyes dissipated somewhat.

Just then, Nicholas' deep, affirmative voice rang beside her. "You're not in a good mood."

Tessa turned to look at Nicholas in surprise. "Is it that obvious?" She thought she had done a good job of concealing it.

Nicholas curled his lips into a faint smile. "I care about you, so it's obvious to me."

Tessa was stunned for a moment before a warmth spread through her. This guy is really getting better and better at flirting!

Just then, Gregory blinked his eyes and asked, “Miss Tessa, are you unhappy?”

Looking at the father and son who were waiting for her answer, Tessa smiled and replied, “It’s nothing. It was just that I was scolded by my mentor during my practice.” She hid the matter about Hayley. Nicholas has done a lot of stuff for me, so I’m gonna take care of this on my own, she thought.

Nicholas and Gregory believed her words. After all, they knew how conscientious she was about her practice.

Patting Tessa on the shoulder like an adult with the body of a child, Gregory comforted Tessa, saying, “Cheer up, Miss Tessa. If there’s anything you’re not good at, let’s practice more on it. Let me practice the violin with you when we get back.”

Nicholas nodded beside them. “I’ll join you guys.”

At the sight of the scene, Tessa was incredibly touched. She got into the car with them, but on their way home, she recalled the matter about Remus. She asked, “Have you visited your grandpa today?”

Nicholas’ lips quirked slightly. He replied with a smile, “Grandpa has gone back to the country.”

“He’s gone back to the country? That’s quick.” Tessa was dumbfounded. She had thought that Remus would at least spend a few days here, so she didn’t expect him to go back so soon. Does this mean that Old Master Sawyer has agreed to Nicholas and me being together?

Knowing what Tessa was thinking at a glance, Nicholas replied, “Don’t worry. Nobody will disturb us anymore.”

Upon hearing this, Tessa was both surprised and puzzled. She pursed her lips, asking, “Are you really gonna rejoin the army and settle down here?”

Having guessed some of Tessa's thoughts, Nicholas explained with a thin smile, "Don't think too much about it. What I mean is that even if I can't take up permanent residence here, there's no problem for me to stay here for a few months."

Still, Tessa was a little worried.

Nicholas continued, "Although Grandpa seems to have given in and left, I know him well enough. He won't give up that easily, so I'm gonna stay a while longer to make him understand that he can't control my life."

Convinced by the man's words, Tessa stopped worrying about it.

A while later, Nicholas stopped the car in front of a Mediterranean restaurant. After taking Tessa and Gregory into the restaurant, he chose a table next to the window, and the three seated themselves. Through the glass window, the three could be seen talking and joking affectionately like a family.

When Hayley saw such a scene, her heart was filled with bitter jealousy. As it turned out, she had been following Tessa and Nicholas in secret ever since the couple met up. Seeing how Nicholas' face bore a kind of tenderness that she had never seen before, she stared at Tessa with venomous eyes. How could such a low-born woman be worthy of Nicholas' tenderness? His tenderness should've belonged to me alone!

She followed the three of them back to the villa. As she stared bitterly in the direction where the trio disappeared, she felt extremely resentful at being treated like this. What makes Nicholas give Tessa such special treatment? That b*tch is inferior to me in every way!

Always Been Yours Chapter 418

Chapter 418 A Brutal Lesson

The more Hayley thought about it, the more angry she was. Unable to withstand such humiliation, she ultimately decided to give Tessa a hard lesson. At the thought of this, she picked up her cell phone, which she had previously put aside, and called a former classmate. “Are you free? I’m in Vienna now. Let’s come out and have a couple of drinks.”

A deep, cheerful male voice sounded through the phone. “I’m free, of course. After all, it’s rare that you ask me out, Hayley.”

Hayley curled her lips with satisfaction. After giving the man an address, she hung up right away.

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In the private room of a luxurious private clubhouse, Hayley was sitting face to face with a handsome young man dressed in a black suit.

This man was Duane Farmiga, a former classmate of Hayley’s who wielded a lot of clout abroad. At the same time, he was also a zealous admirer of hers. Holding his wine glass with undisguised affection in his eyes, he asked, “When did you come to Vienna? Why didn’t you call me earlier so that I could give you a welcome dinner?”

“I just arrived last night, and I’m here because I’ve got something to deal with.” Hayley pretended not to see the affection in Duane’s eyes. After lowering her head to take a sip of her wine, she got straight to the point, saying, “There’s one thing that I need you to do for me.”

“Just say the word and I’ll do as many things for you as you want, let alone one,” Duane replied without hesitation. He asked, “What do you want me to do?”

“I want you to rob someone of her chastity.” Hayley’s eyes narrowed with a look of malice in them. She didn’t tell Duane about Nicholas. Instead, she merely said she wanted to teach Tessa a lesson because this woman had offended her. Furthermore, this was a foreign country. If anything happened to Tessa, no one would suspect her.

Upon hearing her words, Duane laughed. “That’s easy. All I need to do is to find a random opportunity to strike.”

Seeing the man agree to her request so quickly, Hayley got somewhat worried. She reminded him, “Don’t underestimate this woman. The man beside her is very powerful.”

Duane was somewhat unhappy that Hayley spoke highly of another man, though. “However powerful he is, he’s gonna have to be a good boy on my turf.” Inwardly, he made up his mind to get the job done impressively so that Hayley would think better of him.

Hayley’s eyes flickered as she could tell what Duane was thinking. “In that case, I’ll be waiting for your good news.”

“Look forward to it. I’ll definitely get the job done,” Duane guaranteed confidently. Then, he changed the subject and asked Hayley about her life in the country.

Seeing that he had agreed to help her, Hayley told him about some simple things.

A while later, she found it hard to stay any longer. As it turned out, Duane had made his feelings toward her increasingly clear. He even tried to get closer to her, which disgusted her a lot. If it weren’t for him having agreed to deal with Tessa, she would’ve left impatiently long ago. After all, she turned her nose up at every man except Nicholas.

Finally, reaching the limit of her patience, she took her leave without hesitation on the excuse that it was getting late. After rejecting Duane's offer to escort her back to the hotel, she reminded him again, saying, "Don't forget what you've promised me. I'll be waiting for your good news."

Duane did notice Hayley's perfunctory attitude toward him, but it didn't help that he liked it when she treated him like this. "Don't worry. I'll definitely get it done for you."

After seeing Hayley off, Duane immediately had his men look into Tessa and her background. In the middle of the night, he learned about the results of the investigation from his men and was surprised to find that the woman whom Hayley wanted to sort out was actually Hathaway's protégé. However, that was all he found out about the woman's background. Narrowing his eyes, he continued to go over the results and found that Hathaway Philharmonic would be holding a celebration for the 20th anniversary of its foundation in advance at the end of the month. This is a great opportunity to strike, he thought.

Meanwhile, Tessa was unaware that a sinister plot targeting her was approaching. On this day, after Hathaway Philharmonic finished performing in Xerthania and came back, Hathaway had her assistant call Tessa over to her office.

Tessa pushed the door open and entered the office. "Miss Hathaway, are you looking for me?"

Hathaway nodded. After telling Tessa to take a seat, she got down to business, saying, "Our orchestra's gonna hold its 20th anniversary celebration ahead of time, and we're gonna organize a banquet by then. Aside from having the orchestra perform, I'd like to have you perform a solo."

Always Been Yours Chapter 419

Chapter 419 Hathaway Philharmonic 20th Anniversary

“Thank you, Miss Hathaway!” Tessa thanked her in excitement the moment she got over the moment of surprise.

Hathaway smiled faintly. “Don’t get ahead of yourselves now. Although I’ve permitted you to perform on stage, I’ll be much more demanding of you and will increase the number of things you’ll need to practice from now on.”

“I don’t mind. I know you’re doing it for my sake, which is why I’ll do my best to keep up!” Tessa did not think of it as a bother at all.

She felt that Miss Hathaway increasing her practice tasks and becoming much more demanding was her mentor’s way of showing that she had expectations of her.

Furthermore, she was extremely appreciative of every opportunity to be on stage and hoped that she would be in peak condition when performing on stage.

On that same night, Tessa shared the good news with Nicholas and Gregory when she went back home.

“Miss Tessa, you’re amazing!” Gregory hugged Tessa while singing her praises.

Nicholas, though standing at the side, also had a smile on his face at the good news.

And so, over the next few days, Tessa’s schedule was filled to the brim. She would leave the house at the break of dawn and would only come home when the sun was gone. Even so, she still desperately wished that there would be more than 24 hours in a day.

Although Nicholas felt sorry for Tessa being so busy, he knew that she was doing everything she could to chase her dreams, which was why he stayed silent and had instead requested his family's nanny to prepare nutritious meals for Tessa every day as support.

While Tessa was busy practicing, Hayley had met Duane once more. After knowing that he would be making his move at the end of the month, she decided to book a ticket back to Southend.

She could not afford to leave any trace of suspicion to lead back to her.

In a blink of an eye, the Hathaway Philharmonic's 20th anniversary was upon them.

That night, inside that majestic hotel, the tycoons of the performing arts industry had gathered and mingled about with cheerful expressions.

Amid the bustling crowd, Tessa—dressed in a white off-shoulder gown—was following Miss Hathaway. Though Tessa merely applied some simple makeup, her elegance still shone through. Her seaweed-like hair was tied into a half ponytail hairstyle, revealing her fair and slender swan-like neck.

Her silver tassel earrings added another touch of femininity to her overall look tonight.

The guests were full of praises after Hathaway had introduced Tessa to them.

“Hathaway, looks like this protégé of yours would certainly surpass your achievements in the future.”

“I'm tempted to take in another protégé now that I see you have such a good protégé under you.”

“Will your protégé be performing for us tonight?”

“So, who is the better one between your daughter and your protégé?”

Regardless of sincere praises or those with hidden bitterness tucked on, Tessa had gained respect from the guests as she handled herself well and responded appropriately.

Just then, the guests near the entrance were making a commotion.

Tessa and the others turned their attention over to where the commotion was and realized that the reason for it was the arrival of that man—Scott Brooks.

Tonight, Scott was dressed in a perfectly fitted white suit. His standing posture—tall and upright—gave off a gentle and graceful elegance. He was remarkably mesmerizing, as though he was a prince from a fairy tale.

Many young ladies of note were smitten by Scott as they continued to shoot loving glances at him.

However, Scott did not bother with them. Instead, his eyes—like a star in the night sky—went around the room and sparkled upon the sight of Tessa.

The Tessa he saw tonight, who was much more beautiful than usual, had tugged on his heartstrings.

Just as he was about to walk over to greet Tessa, an irksome person came over and stopped him in his tracks.

“Scott, you’re stunningly handsome tonight!”

Kathleen grabbed Scott by the arm in a cheerful attitude, but the gaze in her eyes betrayed her intentions—that she was showing off to the people around that Scott was hers. “Since you’re so handsome tonight, you’ll have to perform a number with me. I won’t take no for an answer.”

The people around them gave a benevolent smile upon Kathleen’s words.

“A duet between the concertmasters of both Berlin Philharmonic and Hathaway Philharmonic would surely be a feast to our ears.”

“Not only for our ears, but even for our eyes. Truly the orchestra’s very own Juliet and Romeo.”

“If this keeps up, we’ll be hearing some good news from the two philharmonics soon.”

As she listened to the crowd joking around, Kathleen’s face grew red, yet she had no plans to retort.

She then turned her attention to Scott with her face full of expectations.

Though Scott had some reservations about the situation, he could only nod as acceptance to her request, for he couldn’t reject Kathleen in front of an audience.

“Hehe, I knew you’d agree to my request.” Kathleen was over the moon with Scott’s answer and continued clinging to him.

When the show was about to begin, she dragged Scott backstage to get ready for the performance.

Always Been Yours Chapter 420

Chapter 420 Opening Number

Tessa was tuning her instrument as she prepared for her performance backstage.

When she saw Kathleen and Scott walking arm-in-arm, she immediately stood up and greeted them with a smile. “Oh, Mr. Brooks, you’re here as well?”

Unexpectedly, Scott instinctively moved his arm away from Kathleen’s arms.

She had originally wanted to flaunt her relationship with Scott at Tessa. However, within seconds, her joyful smile turned stiff as he had made her plan go down the drain.

Beside Kathleen was Scott speaking in a soft and warm voice, “I would not dare reject my senior’s invitation.” He gazed deeply at Tessa as he continued in a gentle tone, “You look beautiful tonight.”

“Thank you,” Tessa replied happily.

Nicholas was the one who prepared the dress she wore tonight. She had thought that the dress was beautiful and suited her extremely well.

“Are you performing tonight?” Scott asked.

“Yes. Miss Hathaway allowed me to perform onstage to get more experience,” she replied with starry eyes while nodding. Her expression was a clear indication that she was looking forward to performing onstage. In the next instant, she looked as though a lightbulb went off in her head as she smiled at him. “Mr. Brooks, are you performing tonight as well?”

Just as Scott was about to answer, Kathleen acted first and answered for him.

“Scott has agreed to perform a duet with me.”

She seized the opportunity to cling to Scott once more as she answered before casting an intense gaze in Tessa’s direction.

Tessa frowned slightly in response as she could feel Kathleen exuding hostility. As a result, her joyful smile faded a little.

Standing beside Kathleen, Scott also frowned in slight displeasure.

However, before he could say anything, Kathleen dragged him away from the conversation. “The party is about to start. Let’s hurry and get some practice in.”

He agreed, albeit begrudgingly. After all, regardless of the scale of the performance, he would give his utmost effort when it came to music.

Soon after, the party was officially underway.

Naturally, as the founder of Hathaway Philharmonic, Hathaway was expected to take the stage and give a speech.

Although she was in her fifties, she still looked elegant and graceful in a green batwing sleeve dress.

“I am truly grateful for everyone who has taken the time to attend the Hathaway Philharmonic’s 20th anniversary celebration. To keep everyone entertained tonight, I will personally perform the opening number.”

Thunderous applause rained down as the crowd was pleased.

“It’s been so long since we’ve last heard Hathaway play. Looks like we’re in for a treat tonight.”

“That’s true. Ever since she had to retire due to her hand injuries, hearing her play has become a rare occurrence.”

“If it hadn’t been for that accident, she would’ve been performing onstage for a far longer time.”

As Tessa listened to the discussion happening around her, curiosity about her mentor grew.

Soon after, a warm and radiant melody came from the stage.

The audience immediately recognized ‘Scottish Fantasy’ as Hathaway was famous for playing this particular piece back in her prime.

Offstage, Tessa couldn’t help but sigh in admiration in her heart as she listened to the performance with keen pleasure, for her mentor was still skillful in her retirement.

As the opening number came to an end, the audience gave thunderous applause.

Hathaway placed her violin down before bowing in thanks to the audience, and then descended the stage.

“It was a perfect performance.”

“As expected of the genius violinist. To think that her skills were still top-notch even after retirement and a chronic injury.”

“It was worth attending today’s performance.”

Numerous renowned musicians started singing Hathaway’s praises.

After all, they were all close friends of Hathaway and were of the same industry.

“If I don’t demonstrate some of my true capabilities, how would I ever win over major players like you all?” Hathaway playfully boasted as she joked around with her close friends.

When Tessa saw her mentor having a good time with her friends, she decided not to interrupt. Tessa went to an area that was less crowded with a glass of wine in her hand and waited for her turn to perform in silence.

Tonight's show was scheduled to move slowly due to her mentor's friends from the industry wanting to perform on stage as well, including famous pianists, cellists, and even those rare ethnic instrument musicians.

It wouldn't be far-fetched to say that it was a musical gala, for every performance so far had been a treat to the ears.

Just as she fully immersed herself in the elegant melodies, Scott's gentle and beautiful voice drifted to her ears.